

Definition, Classification, Preservation and Dissemination of Traditional Sports & Games in Europe

Malgorzata Bronikowska, Michael Groll

Abstract

Traditional sports and games (TSG) cultivate local and regional customs and strengthen the sense of national belonging. Locally or regionally rooted TSG encourage exchanges between districts, citizenship and regions and preserve a sense of cultural identity by providing marks of roots and reference.

In this paper we overview definitions of TSG by different international institutions (e.g. UNESCO, ETSGA) using various academics from the field (e.g. Blanchard, Jaouen and Lipoński). In addition, an appropriate definition of TSG will be proposed using five major aspects related to their processes: heritage, classification, preservation and dissemination and eventually popularization among young generation.

Can we Define TSG Clearly?

Prior to the 1980s, “traditional games” were gradually disappearing yet also remained in the social collective memory, hidden beneath a light layer of dust. Since the 1980s, a movement began to revive TSG, and it was realized then that only few studies had been done before in this field. In 2001 a group of scientists decided to establish the European Traditional Sport and Games Association (ETSGA) with the main goal “to support study research and the creation of inventories and educational play applications of traditional games and sports” (Jaouen, 2000).

Before the time, UNESCO (1990, 254) recognized traditional games as a part of “traditional and popular culture [...] tradition-based creations of a cultural community, expressed by a group or individuals and recognized as reflecting the expectations of community in so far as they reflect its cultural and social identity; its standards and values are transmitted orally, by imitation or by other means [...]”.

Blanchard undertook an anthropological point of view: He saw TSG as forms of sport activities directly tied to particular local ethnic or folk cultures (ethnic or folk sport), mostly competitive with physical play and game-like elements with limited or no professional variants, with stronger ritual overtones than those so-called modern sports. In this respect TSGs preserved traditional values, developed the skills of participants and help to link the present with the past. TSGs manifested the best of the sport institution’s basic qualities (Blanchard, 1995).

The viewpoint of the definition of TSG as a cultural heritage has already been defended by many experts in the field. The most outstanding appears the reflections contributed by Parlebas (2005, 15), who claims that:

“[Traditional; M.B.] Games are the creation of a culture and the fruit of history.[...] [Their; M.B.] are generally seen as community heritage; but we should not forget forms of enjoyment, [...] they reflect the deep social roots of different ways of behaving, of communicating with others and entering into contact with the environment. Linked to secular beliefs, performed according to traditional rites and ceremonies, inspired by practices from everyday life, physical games from part of cultural heritage. [...] And this heritage is highly diverse and exuberant.”

The next step to extend global understanding of TSG was the collective consultation convened in Teheran 2009. The group of TSG experts, led by Guy Jaouen and Wojciech Lipoński, suggested a new TSG definition, which was recognized and supported by the UNESCO:

“Traditional games are motor activities of leisure and recreation which can have a ritual character. They are part of the universal heritage diversity. They are practiced in an individual or collective manner, deriving from regional or local identity; they are based on rules accepted by a group that organizes competitive or non-competitive activities. Traditional games dispose of a popular character in their practice and in their organization, yet if turned into sport tend to be uniform and institutionalized. The practice of traditional games promotes global health.” (UNESCO, 2009).

The authors of this paper find the definition of TSG long and unclear. We believe TSG refer to indigenous, regional (folk) or national forms of culture of physical movement related to certain bodily traditions that are part of human heritage, and transmit cultural and universal values, regardless of their geographical locations, socio-cultural status, and despite political influences, as they are passed from one generation to the next by physical actions (performances and competitions) such as everyday life habitual/working activities, local festivals, national tournaments (Bronikowska 2013). As it is difficult to clearly express TSG, we opt more towards explanation than definition of TSG designation. We agree with TSG as a part of a local, regional or national culture, because even globalized TSG can clearly be recognized in their roots. These types of games and sports are usually played by a minority and still relate to other aspects of culture such as rituals and religions, music, regional clothing, work, etc. Most TSG are still not standardized or institutionalized leisure/past time movement/physical activity. What is more, TSG are the ‘carrier’ of universal, social values and symbolic functions, which are extremely important to the educational dimension of physical culture (e.g. sports practice) and also the inherited living arts, which enhance collective well-being (Jaouen, 2003). The knowledge we acquire from TSG is a rich resource for the present and for the future. They are not “just games, “they are part of culture, history, a goal, a people, a purpose, a structure, a philosophy and a strategy. TSG are an important because they help refine many skills (e.g. teamwork, co-operation, managing a challenge, setting and achieving goals), build character, provide an outlet for expression and allow for the improvement of performance. They allow for fun, enjoyment and fun and making friends. During most of TSG we can develop fair play idea and a healthy life style or positive attitude to life (Egan, 2003).

In the conceptual classification model of sporting and non-sporting activities proposed by Gratton and Taylor (2000), TSG can be recognized as sports if they are competitive, with well-publicized world championships (e.g. kabaddi, kubb, darts). In these countries where this kind of sports are popular, society recognizes them as active sports (e.g. Gaelic football, hurling, pelota) even if they involve little or no physical exertion (e.g. croquet, Mikado), so they do not fulfil the criterion of physical activity (Gratton, Taylor, 2000). On the other hand Rodgers' 1977 argumentation is that sport should involve physical activity, be practiced for a recreational purposes, involve an element of competition and have a framework of institutional organization. In contrast, Renson's et. al. (1988) recognize that TSG activities have to include physical activity with cultural elements and local/regional rules. Interestingly, the historical aspects of the game is not as important here, and table nor computer games are not considered.

Classification Typology and Characteristics of TSG in Europe from Historical to Recent Points of View.

There are many categories of TSG and ways in which they can be structured. From the historical point of view we should start with Joseph Strutt (1749-1802), the first person to be genuinely and seriously interested in describing the English sports and pastimes, and who laid the foundations for future historic and ethnographic research in this field. He classified TSG based on two different categories, according social attachment: 1) 'sports of the nobility' (e.g. hunting, horse racing, tournaments, archery, games of strength and games of ball, water sports) and 2) 'sports of the common people' (e.g. quintain and outdoor games, children's games and others) (Strutt, 1801).

The next example of proposition of games and play¹ classification worthy to is the work of Roger Caillois, "*Les Jeux et les homes. Le masque et le vertige*" (Eng. Man, play and games...). Caillois builds critically on the theories of Huizinga, adding a more comprehensive review of play forms. He disputes Huizinga's emphasis on competition in play and argues that we can understand the complexity of games by referring to four play forms and two types of play: 1) *Agon*, with a mean of competition games (e.g. pierścieniówka, ringtennis); 2) *Alea* or chance games; 3) *Mimicry*, or mimesis, or role playing games; 4) *Ilinx* (Gr. for 'whirlpool'), or vertigo, in the sense of altering perception. e.g. children spinning until they fall down. He also claims that most of games and play combine these elements in various ways like for example some of dancing activities include an *ilinx* activity, which can be combined with mimesis to portray characters, or with *agon* in competitive dance.

¹ Play by Johan Huizinga: Summing up the formal characteristics of play we might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious', but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means (Huizinga 1950, 13).

Caillois also places forms of play on a continuum from *ludus*², structured activities with explicit rules of games, to *paidia*³, unstructured and spontaneous activities (playfulness), although in human affairs the tendency is always to turn *paidia* into *ludus*, and that established rules are also subject to the pressures of *paidia*. It is this process of rule-forming and re-forming that may be used to account for the apparent instability of cultures (Caillois, 1958).

There was also the Polish academic Eugeniusz Piasecki, who devoted over 25 years of his life to work on TSG. He established a classification of games and thought play (as a mean of primary form of games and some sports) could be defined as: 1) self-originated; 2) based on traditional rites, legends and fairytales; 3) mimic and imitation of human habitual activities; and 4) based on movement expression inspired by the human natural environment (Piasecki, 1959).

The Council of Europe first in Vila Real in Portugal (1988), and then in Leuven in Belgium (1990) led by Roland Renson, Michel Manson, Erik de Vroede, produced the *Classification of TSG*. It was later updated by Guy Jaouen in Spring 2001, and then by Pere Lavega Burguès in Spring 2003 (ETSGA, 2003, web) and covers two common approaches detailed below. The first, adopted by the European Traditional Sports and Games Association, outlines eight divisions, starting with ball sports. The second approach expands on ball sports, the chosen category for the RePlay project, and is frequently employed in the area of PE. Both examples are populated with a variety of sports to exemplify the categories and indicate to other sports their relationship to the sports selected for inclusion in this project (<http://www.iugaje.com/en/?go=Typologie>).

The main European TSG classification concept is based on the eight traditional types of human physical activities. The classification is as follow:

- 1) Ball games with interaction between the players and the malleable ball without any other equipment and with an equipment (e.g. racket, bat, stick);
- 2) Ball (or bowl) and pins games with the concept of the spheroid as a characteristic element of the ball, which is not malleable and rolls or glides: a) balling games with the concept to approach without other equipment, round ball, flat balls or hanging balls, with equipment (such as billiard); b) skittle games involving knocking down with balls, sticks or skittle with throwing away balls or a puck;
- 3) Throwing games involving throwing objects such as discs and rings with agility, or, sticks and darts with the aim of accuracy and hitting a target. Other equipment might be used to reach the distance or height, such as throwing the hammer, tossing the sheaf or bullet, or, weights or cabers can be used, such as tossing the caber;

² *Ludus* (Latin for play, playful) - It refers to any philosophy where play is the prime purpose of life.

Ludic connotes anything that is 'fun'.

³ *Paidia* – Gr. word for playing children, kids.

- 4) Shooting games involving the use of a driving (shaft) equipment like long-bow and crossbow, fire-arms: shooting at a vertical pole, target shooting, blowpipe and sling;
- 5) Fighting and jousting games involving confrontation between human beings with (e.g. tug-of-war) or without equipment (e.g. wrestling), confrontation against objects: jousts against the resistance of objects (e.g. drilling stones contest), jousting for agility (e.g. quintana);
- 6) Animal games where an animal is the playing object (cruel games), with the confrontation between man and animal or competition amongst animals e.g. combats (cock fighting), racing (dog racing), warbling;
- 7) Locomotion games involving moving oneself or moving an object;
- 8) Acrobatics which requires skillful body control (e.g. castells).

Categorization of ball-based sports frequently used in PE contains:

- 1) Invasion sports: Hurling (IE), Camogie (IE), Shinty (Scotland), Bandy (Russia, UK), Crosse (Wallonie), Field Hockey, Ice Hockey, Polocrosse (instrument) and Gaelic Football (IE), Soccer, Basketball, Netball, Rugby, Touch football, Australian Football (non-instrument);
- 2) Net-based sports: Courte Paume (FR), Tennis, Badminton, Table Tennis (instrument) and Ringo (PL), Pierścieniówka (PL), Volleyball, (non-instrument);
- 3) Wall-based sports: Pala (ES), Jai-alai (Cesta) (ES), Paleta Goma (ES), Paleta Cuero Fronton (ES), Paleta Cuero Triquete (ES), Xare (ES), , Frontenis, Squash (instrument) and Handball (ES, IE), Mano Trinquete (ES), Pelota Valenciana (ES), Muurkaatsen (BE), Fives (UK) (non-instrument);
- 4) Striking and Fielding sports: Shinty (Scotland), Longue Paume (FR), Palla Tamburello (IT), Rounders (IE), Cricket, Baseball (instrument) and Pallapugno (IT) (non-instrument);
- 5) Aiming sports: La Soule (FR), Golf, Croquet (instrument) and La Soule (FR), Tenpin bowling, Lawn bowls (non-instrument).

Although the process of the games classification is still dynamic and changes, depending on new knowledge of different types of TSG, the above sample is the most current. It is based on regions' different culture backgrounds, geography and life experiences.

TSG provides society with easy rules of play. This makes them more entertaining and attractive to people of different age (from the very early to older ages) and different level of fitness. An advantage is that participants do not need any professional sport skills to begin, which means TSGs are accessible to all who have the will to move. It is worthwhile to mention that most TSGs don't emphasize winning and losing, and improve the universal/cultural values which that can be transmitted from generation to generation. What is more, through TSGs, imagination and creativity can be easily developed and communication skills and social abilities enhanced. There is a rich diversity of regional variation of TSG all over the world that use non-conventional or minimal facilities and equipment (i.e. bags, ropes, hoops, marbles, skittles and jacks) depending on geographic and local cultural conditions.

Heritage of TSG for Physical Education and Modern Sport

Rink (2001, p.115) says that “knowing how to get learners processing what they are doing enough to generate appropriate motor responses and knowing when to intervene with more specific help and different tasks that elicit more advanced responses may be the art of teaching in physical and should be a major concern for researchers who would understand teaching”. Although the sport education model may enhanced the development of more democratic and equitable practices in schools, the existing PE process is aimed at teaching/learning skills and specific knowledge, thus enabling individuals to develop health potential through physical activity occurring in a physical context. Naul (2003) distinguishes four major vectors determining directions of today's PE concepts in Europe: the **cultural heritage** of PE vector, the **sport education** vector, the **movement education** vector and the **health education** vector. Each needs to be taken into account while planning changes into curriculum and content approach.

We believe it is now necessary for school PE (teachers) to start using exploratory (searching) models of teaching, employing more active teaching and learning techniques through experienced-based (and “life skills”-based) learning methods, or theme-based learning approaches, with curricula expanding over such themes as “movement and physical literacy”, “physical activity, health and fitness, “competition and cooperation”, “challenge” in a multidisciplinary approach to teaching and learning in PE (Penney & Chandler 2000).

This will also require the use of the following teaching styles: guided discovery, divergent learners design. Or, Salvara et al. (2006), suggests recent division of teaching styles into discovery and production styles more than reproduction or assimilation. It will require, according to Young 1998 (p.154) higher learning skills by providing: the context of criticism (in which it will challenge the theory and out-side school reality), the context of discovery (in which new concepts are developed and used) and the context of practical application (in which new ideas are tried out in the real world). One idea might be promoting the educational aspect of TSG by using existing, suitable infrastructures in the community (e.g. fields, arenas, stadiums or gyms), engaging an active organizations that prepare teachers/coaches/animations and referees, and establishes rules, policy and structure and integrating TSG with modern games into the school curriculum (as a key step in promoting TSG).

Moreover it is essential to emphasize the amateur spirit of the games, which may be taken for fun, fitness and health purposes and different levels of competition that facilitate inclusion (Egan, 2003).

An interesting proposition of two PE teachers (Papathanasiou from Greece and Mayova from Czech) should draw attention of education authorities, specialists and curricula designers to the increasing future demanding development of e-learning methods. “Exchange of games”, a e-Twinning project is a website where teachers from all over the world can present their national games. It was developed as an idea of searching for new methodological propositions to enhance traditional teaching contents. It started with the game called “Beating out” and an old Greek game called “Faininda” which have been compared with their Twinspace. After this, the two schools played the two games with their pupils during PE classes. In addition, they also shared PowerPoint presentations which contained a number of pictures to help better understand the game. In the end, the students began to play the games on their own and introduced them to other students in their schools (<http://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/news>). It has become more than a matter of PE matter and includes projects involved children (during computer classes, language and cultural exchange) and also teachers of various subjects working in a network of schools.

Therefore, when Penney and Chandler (2000) ask “PE – what future(s)?” we would answer: our future depends on how effectively we can adjust our (PE) contents and curricula to the future social needs. Focusing on the development of an awareness of one’s own body, health and its physical and intellectual potential in and via PE is essential if we want to gain more effectiveness in promoting lifelong patterns of participation and performance in physical activity. Content, design of the task and lesson organization, teaching styles and methods, lesson that allow pacing and pupils’ level of motivation and processing all may become important issues in research, however, we believe there is no “silver bullet” teaching method in PE – it all comes down to a question of the philosophy behind the teaching/learning process of the whole schooling environment. In this sense TSG can be the bearers of innovative, enriching ideas, the introducing of which can serve as an example to other regions, countries and continents seeking to launch similar action with regard to TSG as a tool for entertainment, socialization and education (Jaouen, 2006, p.12). We can say this is what PE ought to do --bring out the full value of this heritage and thus help to create a space where people can truly live well, in harmony with different cultural expressions, building bridges between cultures and enhancing mutual understanding. Therefore, TSG is an alternative to modern PE and sports that could rich the educational process of teaching and coaching by various physical culture experiences and bridge not only different cultures but also generations.

Conclusion Remarks

If the variety of play and games represents the commonwealth of the peoples’ of the world, each reduction of their popularity is a threat against all of us/all of our cultures. That is why, if biodiversity is fundamental for the survival of life, then ludodiveristy is the value of TSG for the survival of culture (Eichberg 2004).

According to UNESCO (2006) this is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the future generations. Parlebas, (2003, p.16) expressed the cultural diversity of games saying that “social group and people in general distinguish themselves as much by their games as they do by their languages and yet the Scottish *caber tossing*, American *baseball*, English *cricket*, Basque *pelote*, African *dugout races* or the Afghan *buzkashi* are practices that are as distinctive as their homes or the structure of their genetic heritage.”

Bibliography:

Blanchard K., *The Anthropology of Sport*, Bergin and Garvey, Westport, Connecticut – London 1995.

Caillois R. (1958), *Les Jeux et les homes. Le masque et le vertige*, Éditions Gallimard.

Egan S., (2003), *An Holistic Analysis of the Educational Components of Traditional Games*, *Studies in Physical Culture and Tourism*, Vol.10, No 1., 39-49.

Eichberg (2004), Nørgaard, *Education through Play and Game – Danish Experiences (w:) Education through Sport: Towards an International Academy of Sport for All. A report to the International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA) and the European Commission*, Gerlev: *International Movement Studies 2004* – <http://www.iasfa.org/literature.htm>

Gratton Ch, Taylor P (2000), *Economics of Sport and Recreation*, Spon Press, London.

Huizinga J. (1950), *Homo Ludens*, New York: Roy Publishers.

Jaouen G. (2003), *Educational Stakes for The 21st Century Society Trough Inheritance, Diffusion, And Transmission of Tradition Games (Preface)*, *Studies in Physical Culture and Tourism*, Vol. 10, No.1, 11-13.

Jaouen, 2006

Naul, R. (2003) *Concepts of Physical Education in Europe*, in: K. Hardman (Ed.) *Physical Education: deconstruction and reconstruction – issues and directions*, (Berlin, Verlag Karl Hofmann Schorndorf), 35-53.

Parlebas P. (2003), *The Destiny of Games Heritage and Lineage*, *Studies in Physical Culture and Tourism*, Vol. 10, No 1, 15-26.

Penney, D. & Chandler, T. (2000) *Physical Education: What future (s)?*, *Sport, Education and Society*, 5, (1), 71-87.

Piasecki E. (1959), *Tradycyjne zabawy I gry ruchowe oraz ich geneza*. In: Michał Godycki (ed.) *40 lat od Katedry Wychowania Fizycznego UP do Wyższej Szkoły Wychowania Fizycznego w Poznaniu*. Poznan, 89-303.

Renson R., Manson M., Vroede De E. (eds), *Typologie de classement de jeux traditionnels en Europe*, Dossier no. 1, *Classement élaboré après les séminaires de Vila Real, Portugal (1988), et Leuven, Belgique (1990); Élaboré après saisies et additions de G. Jaouen, Printemps 2001*.

Rink, J.E. (2001) *Investigating the assumptions of pedagogy*, *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 20, 112-128.

Salvara, M.I., Jess, M., Abbott, A., Bogнар, J. (2006) A preliminary study to investigate influence of different teaching styles on pupils' goal orientations in physical education, *European Physical Education Review*, 12, (1), 51-74.

Strutt J., *Sport and Pastimes of the People of England*, Methuen & Co, London 1801.

Shulman, L.S. (1986) Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15, (2), 4-14.

Young, M.F.D. (1998) *The curriculum of the Future: From the "New Sociology of Education" to a Critical Theory of Learning*, (London, Falmer Press).

UNESCO (1999), *Third International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS III) Final Report*, Punta del Este, Uruguay.

UNESCO (2006) <Declaratió Universal de la UNESCO sobre la diversitat cultural > [en linea], [http:// www. Unescocat.org/ct/p6/diversitatcultural.pdf](http://www.Unescocat.org/ct/p6/diversitatcultural.pdf)

UNESCO (2009), *International Charter of Traditional Sports and Games*, internal act UNESCO held by W. Lipońskiego, 1.

<http://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/news/interviews /interview with kostas papathan.htm>
www.health-a-ware.eu

<http://www.jugaje.com/en/?go=Typologie>

This article edited by the University School of PE Poznan and German Sport University Cologne is published as part of project „Recall: Games of the Past – Sports for Today”, co-funded by the European Commission. Project Recall aims to reintroduce Traditional Sports and Games into the daily lives of children and youth, as a means to tackle social challenges of today, including the physical inactivity crisis.

Any reproduction of this article should reference the authors and project Recall.

Led by TAFISA, project Recall gathers 13 transnational project partners coming from all over Europe:

